

## Re-re-re-return of Goods Makes All Goods Cost More

TRIBUNE IDEAS OF SATISFACTION  
PRESUPPOSE PROPER USE AND NOT  
ABUSE OF SENT-ON-APPROVAL  
PRIVILEGE

"Satisfaction or Your Money Back" Holds  
Good, but—Tribune Fair Play Is Based  
on Belief That Satisfaction Rests on  
Quality and Good Value, Not on  
Fickle-Mindedness or "Sweating"

By SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

"Originally a charge account meant accommodation to a customer who did not have ready money. To-day it means license accorded to women to buy without stint and return without compunction merchandise that they do not want, and never should have ordered."

In these words of a prominent New York merchant is expressed the gist of a commercial abuse which has become intolerable; the abuse of the "bought on approval" privilege. Not in New York only, but throughout the country it has grown to such proportions that stores are being compelled, in self-defence, to take measures to limit it. Women are the chief offenders; and not the stores alone, but the general public as well are the victims, since all must pay the cost of this carelessly or consciencelessly wasteful type of shopping.

Consider the following prime facts about the return of goods once bought.

Probably five million dollars is wasted yearly in New York City through unreasonable return of purchased goods. You pay the bill.

Twenty per cent of all goods sold are returned. Not once in a hundred times is there any sound reason for the return.

Thirty per cent of all charged goods are returned. It's the charge account which forms the habit.

These percentages are increasing yearly. It takes 150 per cent of delivery to sell 100 per cent of merchandise. The extra 50 per cent goes into reselling returned goods.

Every article purchased and returned goes through nineteen hands in the process.

One store spends ten thousand dollars yearly in cleaning returned goods.

Another wastes more money in the expense of handling returns than it pays for rentals.

A woman purchasing clothing, which she assumes to be new, has one chance out of three of getting something which some other woman has bought before her and rejected.

The return habit is unsanitary, unfair and expensive. Finally, it's your fault. If you're a woman, it's your fault in that you countenance the process. If you're a man and pay the bills, it's your fault because you permit it.

Not wholly your fault, either. It's partly the fault of the stores themselves. For they encourage the practice by over-salesmanship, by pressing upon the customer goods which she does not really want. Moreover, they wink at the abuse, even in extreme cases, by permitting the habitual offender to continue, instead of cutting her off from the charge privilege.

Thus it spreads. And thus the store suffers by a great increase in the expense of salesmanship, delivery, accounting, wrapping and damage to the goods. The salespeople not only suffer by loss of commissions, but their chance of advancement is lessened and sometimes dismissal results. The shopper suffers sometimes by getting second-hand goods instead of new. The public suffers through the increased price which the stores are forced to charge.

The habitual abuser of the return privilege may belong to one of three classes. There is the ordinary "repeater," whose offence may arise from sheer carelessness or thoughtlessness of the rights and proper functions of a store. Education will mend her.

There is the confirmed experimenter, or "fusser," as the shop-people call her, whose trouble is psychological: she makes up her mind with the utmost difficulty, and changes it with the utmost ease. An alienist might help the bad cases and a neurologist the mild ones.

And finally there is the "sweater," whose grafting operations are set forth in detail below. Jail would be none too harsh a penalty for her.

Of the first class a fair example is a woman who recently allowed herself to be fascinated by a Broadway store's blouse sale. From table to table she wandered, picking out blouses to be sent to her on approval. On the following day she sent back no less than fifteen blouses. And, at that, she had kept five! She explained, in a faint and furtive voice over the phone, that she hadn't realized how many she was getting.

How unfair the approval method may be to a store is shown in the case of a rug purchase. A couple from a Pennsylvania town came to a department store seeking a rug of a particular and unusual size and color. After a search, the rug department head found one at an importer's and took it on a three-day privilege. The Pennsylvanians were delighted. Just what they wanted! They took it at once and it was sent to their home, \$1,750 being charged to their account. The store paid the importer at the end of the month. Just six weeks later the rug was returned without so much as a line of explanation or comment. The store made inquiries and was calmly informed that the rug had been taken only on approval. There was nothing to be done. Thus there is now being carried by the rug department a \$1,750 rug which, owing to its odd size and color, may not be salable for years.

Another local shop tells this story on itself. A Brooklyn woman, moving from a house into a flat, had a large lamp and no place for it. Bewailing the fact to a friend, she met with the query: "Where did you buy it?" "At Z—s," she replied. "When?" "Eight years ago." "That ain't very long. Take it back. They'll exchange it." And they did. Thus flourisheth the art of refurbishing a home for nothing.

There are also ways of replenishing one's wardrobe gratis. A well-to-do but financially cautious New York woman, wishing to keep pace with the changeable seasons, sent an old hat to a well-known shop to be retrimmed with blue ribbon. The ribbon was cut, put on and charged. When the hat came home the woman perceived that she had made an error in color. She returned the hat and picked out cerise ribbon, for which she wished

the blue exchanged. When the re-trimmed hat appeared she liked it pretty well for two days, at the end of which time her vagrom fancy turned to olive green. So she brought it in for a re-re-trimming. She got it—at the store's expense, of course, on exchange. Back went the hat to her. In a week it was in the store again.

"Mrs. W—," explained the saleswoman who had handled the matter, to the department head, "thinks that black is her color, after all, so if we will re-re-re-trim her!"

"Stop it!" shouted the maddened department head. "Re-re-re-trim—you talk like a college yell. For God's sake, tell her we'll credit her with the whole hat, and tell her quick before she ruins the store!"

When it comes to long distance claiming, honors go to Mrs. Lucy E. Dills, who returned to the Linn-Scruggs Drygoods Co., of Decatur, Ill., a ball of red yarn which she had bought there just seventeen years before. She said she'd made up her mind she didn't like the color. The store kindly exchanged it, and Mrs. Dills is reported to be knitting it into something for Belgian relief.

While Mrs. Dills may claim the record for living people, she is quite outdone by a claim made upon a New York department store in the matter of some unbleached stockings in boxes. The oldest living inhabitant of the shop couldn't recall any stockings of that type; but the boxes bore the store imprint, so the book-keeper set to work. After an obstinate search he ran the record to earth, twenty-four years back. The original purchaser had died and the heirs who stood in her shoes had sent back her stockings!

And now a word as to "sweaters" of merchandise. There may be a more contemptible species in the world of trade: if so, my long and varied investigations have not yet discovered it.

Manipulators of gold coin long ago devised a method whereby the money was stirred about in a chemical solution which removed a small portion of the precious metal from each piece. The money, lighter than normal and devalued to just that extent, was then returned to circulation, and the operator took his profit in the gold remaining at the bottom of the pan. This process was known as sweating coin. There are in the clientele of every large store women (and occasionally men) who "sweat" merchandise by a process analogous to the coin manipulation. They will order clothes or other goods, use them for their own purposes for a longer or shorter time, and then return them for credit or exchange as unsatisfactory, having sweated part of the value out of them.

In the course of an investigation last fall I was in the dress and cloak department of a local store, when a pleasant looking young girl came in, followed by a maid carrying an evening wrap. "I've changed my mind about this," explained the customer.

"When I tried it on at home it wasn't becoming at all."

"When was it bought?" asked the head of the department.

"Just a few days ago."

Recourse to the records showed that "a few days" was rather a meagre estimate, as the purchase had been made nearly a month before.

"But this looks as if it had been worn," said the store woman, examining the collar, which was slightly but unmistakably soiled. "Oh, no," denied the customer, unblushingly. "I've never had it on, except to try it."

Shaking out the garment, the department head noticed that there was a bulge in one pocket. She investigated and drew forth:

Item: A pair of worn white evening gloves.

Item: A small powder box.

Item: A theatre programme of the week previous.

The fair customer had "sweated" that wrap. Was she perturbed by the evidence adduced? Probably. But she didn't show it. She simulated puzzled surprise. She "couldn't imagine how those things got there." And she stuck to it that she wanted the garment credited.

What's more (and worse), she got it credited. "What else could we do?" said the shop woman despairingly, turning to me after the "sweater" had gone. "She's got a charge account here."

"I'll tell you what I'd do," I volunteered. "I'd refuse to accept the wrap and I'd close her account to-day."

"And offend her and all her family and friends? We couldn't do that. We're quite helpless in such a case."

"Not at all. Give me her name and address and I'll print the plain facts in The Tribune. That will discourage her and warn others like her."

The shop woman was quite horrified. No store in town, she assured me, could afford to appear in such a matter. No; there was nothing to be done but charge the deal up to profit and loss. And so, through its timidity, that store became virtually an accomplice in, as well as a victim of, an act as essentially dishonest as shop-lifting—and rather meaner.

A woman member of a well known professional man's family recently went into a Fifth Avenue store and asked to see a few of the best hats in the house. After some hesitation between a \$125 creation and a \$115 model, she took the more expensive. Later she telephoned and had the other sent to her home. Two days later she returned both hats with a note, in which she said:

"I have dug out my last season's hat, and I find the shape is just as good as either of these."

What she had actually done was to take both hats to her milliner and have them copied. Of course, part of the value had been "sweated" out of them, as, with copies being paraded on the head of the "sweater," they could no longer be regarded as exclusive models.

The shopper in this instance was less frank than the customer of a St. Louis department store, who, after fourteen days of holding her purchases, found cause to regret her premature action, and wrote to the store this explanation:

"Am sending back three mourning hats. Patient doing fine. Yours truly."

"Women's Wear," which vouches for the two preceding incidents, cites another occurring in the china department of a New York shop. A woman returned for credit a set of dishes which she had purchased only a few days before. She explained to the buyer of the department on her next visit to the place that she found the color scheme jarred with the wallpaper of her dining room. Meantime the buyer had seen the dishes.

"I hope you had a nice party," he said, courteously. "Party?" echoed the customer, turning pink. "Yes. You left some chicken salad on one of the plates."

Investigation, after the return of the china, had brought out the fact that the woman, lacking enough dishes to go around for a luncheon which she was giving, had "sweated" the store for them. Nevertheless, that buyer was weak enough to accept the dishes rather than "offend a charge customer."

Not all local stores are so timorous. Last year a big shop received for credit on April 1 a woman's suit which had been purchased by a charge customer. Records were looked up, and it was found that 90 per cent of the woman's purchases were returned after periods varying from a few days to several weeks. Her account was closed and the store offered her a liberal choice

# HEARN

Fourteenth Street

West of Fifth Avenue



## 15TH GREAT SPRING SALE ON EVERY FLOOR IN EVERY SECTION

THE UNUSUAL PRICES OF THIS SALE  
HAVE BROUGHT CROWDS EACH DAY

Easter Wearables of Great Charm  
Many Things New! Many Things Lovely!  
Suits and Hats in Distinctive Fashions  
Frocks of Clever Designs and Interesting Fabrics

Spring Sale Makes Easter Wearables Extremely Moderate in Price

### SPRING SALE SPECIALS

**For Monday and Tuesday**

\$3.98 Ready-to-Wear Hats.....2.77  
Black and colors, also combinations—new sailor and sport styles. Limit two.

\$3.74 Untrimmed Lingerie Hats.....2.87  
Large and small—new shapes. Trimmed free if materials are purchased here.

55 ct. Roses, Pansies, Daisies and Wreaths......36  
In all the new Spring colors. Limit four.

39 ct. Men's Silk Hose......27  
Black, white and colors—double heel and toe. Limit 4 prs.

64 ct. Men's Underwear......52  
Shirts, long sleeves—drawers, double seats—Otis and other makes—all sizes. Limit 4.

49 ct. Men's Silk Neckwear......37  
Silks, satins, tulle, crepes, failles—new colors and designs. Limit two.

97 ct. Men's Pajama Tops......78  
Neat colored stripes on white—all sizes. Limit 3.

98 ct. Women's Nightgowns......67  
Nainsook, cambric, muslin—various models. Limit 2.

98 ct. Women's Petticoats......63  
Regular or extra sizes—ruffle of wide embroidery or lace. Limit 2.

### A Georgette Crepe Frock



Georgette crepe frock (illustrated) in blue. Gold embroidery. All sizes for women and misses.

Our reg. \$39.98  
32.75

### A Very Special Group of SAMPLE DRESSES

Not a great number of frocks, but very many different styles—remarkably priced—because they are manufacturer's Spring samples, bought greatly below prices.

Embroidered Georgette crepes, crisp tulle, shimmering crepe meters—soft crepe de chine and combinations of crepe Georgette and crepe meter, in distinctive styles—each one as smart as may be—sizes 16 to 38.

At following attractive prices—16.57, 18.75, 24.75

Alterations free of charge.

Bought in the usual way would retail at \$24.75, \$29.75, \$37.75.

### Springtime Top Coats



Velour Top Coat (illustrated) for Women.

SPECIAL—

Reg. \$81.74.....25.00

Various other models in Guniburl, poplins, serges, gabardines, velours—all newest shades—green, gold, rose, chartreuse, including black. Fitted, semi-fitted and gathered effects—belt, large collars (instead of detachable), buttons and pockets—lined throughout and half lined.

Alterations free of charge.

### SPRING SALE SPECIALS

**For Monday and Tuesday**

\$17.98 Women's and Misses' Spring Suits.....12.50  
Natty serge models—navy, tan, gold and black—also misses' sizes in wool checks—sports models—women's, 36 to 46—misses', 14 to 18 yrs. Alterations free of charge.

\$14.98 Women's and Misses' Taffeta Dresses.....10.75  
Green, navy, Copenhagen, gray and black—emb'd blouse—new Spring models—women's sizes 36 to 42—misses', 14 to 16 yrs. Alterations free of charge.

\$4.98 Crepe de Chine and Crepe Georgette Blouses.....3.75  
Fringed or double breasted styles—white, flesh, peach, maize. Limit 2.

\$2.98 White Voile Blouses.....1.95  
Embroidered fronts, with dainty fine tucks—fillet lace insertions and trimmings. Limit 2.

\$1.98 White Voile Blouses.....1.36  
In various styles—tucked or lace trimmed. Limit two.

\$1.24 Women's Sateen Petticoats......72  
Black and colored—pleated or tailored flounces, fitted bands—all sizes. Limit two.

\$2.50 Corsets.....1.54  
Long hip—elastic inserts—trimmed with embroidery. Limit two.

\$1.94 Girls' Tub Dresses.....1.54  
Spring styles in plaid gingham or chambray—6 to 14 yrs. Limit two.

98 ct. Misses' and Girls' Middy Blouses......65  
Regulation style, all white or with colored collars and cuffs—silk laces—pockets—6 to 20 yrs. Limit three.

\$1.50 Babies' Sweater Coats......94  
Roll collar, pockets—white, light combinations and good range of colors—to 3 yrs. Limit 2.

49 ct. Children's Cambric Drawers......37  
Finished with embroidery, insertion and edging—1 to 12 yrs. Limit 2.

\$1.34 Misses' Lingerie Princess Slips.....1.00  
Yoke of wide fillet lace—shoulder strap, ruffle with two rows of lace to match—14 to 18 yrs. Limit 2.

50 ct. Little Tots' Hats......25  
Crash, with colored or checked silk crowns—mushroom shapes. Limit two.

98 ct. Little Tots' White Dresses......74  
Yoke, empire or normal waist models, finished with lace and embroidery. Limit 3.

98 ct. Little Tots' Tub Dresses......62  
To 6-yr. size—gingham, chambray—new Spring models. Limit 3.

17 ct. Silk Soutache Braids......12  
12-yard piece—black, white and new Spring shades. Limit 3.

25 ct. Ribbons......18  
Satin, moire, tulle, check and Dresden—millinery and sash widths, white, black, colors. Limit 10 yds.

9 ct. Fancy Cotton Laces......4  
New popular patterns for Summer frocks, blouses, children's clothes, underwear, etc. Limit 15.

11 ct. White Embroideries......8  
Edgings, Inserting, Beading, on cambric, nainsook and Swiss—good widths. Limit 10 yds.

47 ct. Embroidery Flouncings......38  
26 and 40 inch—on Voile and Swiss, including baby effects. Limit 10 yds.

94 ct. Lawn and Gingham House Dresses......75  
Gray, blue, lavender and pink stripes—also lawn in black and blue stripes—well made—sizes 36 to 46.

97 ct. Scarfs, Shams, Centres......68  
White, imitation Cluny insertion or fillet. Limit four.

49 ct. Silver Plated Photograph Frames......28  
Oval, velvet covered backs. Limit 2.

19 ct. Character Dolls......36  
Unbreakable heads—dressed in pink or blue rompers and cap. Limit one.

19 ct. Cabinet of Stationery......13  
White—24 to 36 sheets, envelopes. Limit 2.

New Mixed Feather Pillows—Free from odor and dust—strong ticking covering—Our reg. \$1.19—20x28......91  
Our reg. \$1.33—22x28......97  
Our reg. \$1.49—24x30......116  
Our reg. \$1.69—26x30......127

14 ct. Unbleached Muslins......94  
39 inch—10 to 20 yds. length. Limit 20 yds.

6 ct. Cheese Cloth......4  
Bleached—36 inches wide—sanitary and absorbent. Limit 1 piece.

\$1.98 Crochet Spreads......1.47  
Full size—no dressing. Limit 3.

\$1.19 Hemstitched Sheets......80  
90x99—standard quality. Limit 12.

29 ct. Stamped Scarfs and Centres......20  
White—scarfs 17x54—centres 33x33—pretty designs. Limit 4.

69 ct. Crib Blankets......45  
Eiderdown finish. Jacquard all over designs—pink, blue. Limit 3.

### SPRING SALE SPECIALS

**For Monday and Tuesday**

\$5.98 Boys' Norfolk Suits.....4.55  
Cheviots and homespun—brown, gray and green, in stripes, twills and mixtures—pencil or yoke back—flap pockets—cuff sleeves—3-piece belt—serviceable linings—8 to 18 years. Limit two.

\$4.98 Boys' Spring Suits.....3.85  
Cassimere, cheviot—semi-Norfolk models—yoke or pencil back—patch pockets—cuff sleeves—3-piece belt—serviceable linings—8 to 17 years. Limit two.

\$3.98 Boys' Suits—8 to 17 yrs.....3.15  
Single breasted styles—cheviots, in checks and stripes. Limit two.

\$1.50 Boys' Trousers.....1.28  
Cheviots, worsteds, tweeds, medium or dark twill and mixtures, herring-bone stripes and fancies—7 to 17 yrs. Limit three.

49 ct. Boys' Blouses......37  
Light, medium and fancy percale, with yoke—attached collars—8 to 15 years. Limit four.

49 ct. Boys' Caps......38  
New Spring styles and colors—mixtures and combinations—also checks—taped—full crowns. Limit two.

49 ct. Rompers......38  
Gingham, chambray—fancy stripes or in plain colors—high or low neck, short or long sleeves—2 to 8 years. Limit two.

39 ct. Silk Mixed Pongees......31  
35-inch—soft, lustrous fabrics in a variety of good shades for day or evening. Limit 14 yards.

19 ct. Dress Gingham, 32-inch......14  
Good variety of plaids for misses' and children's frocks. Limit 12 yds.

15 ct. Fancy Voiles......11  
Pretty flowered, figured patterns. Limit 20 yards.

\$1.19 Yard Wide Lining Satins......84  
Fashionable light and dark shades. Limit 7 yards.

39 ct. Mercerized Sateens, 36-in......32  
Soft, lustrous—makes pretty petticoats—in all the new Spring colors. Limit 15 yards.

58 ct. White Gabardines......44  
Heavy weight—for Summer skirts, middie coats, etc. Limit 15 yds.

25 ct. White Galateas......18  
36 inches wide—good looking skirts, dresses, middies are made of this excellent quality. Limit 15 yds.

47 ct. Collars and Collar and Cuff Sets......36  
Plain or embroidered, organdie or voile—some all lace or combined with Swiss embroidery in many styles. Limit 3.

94 ct. Chiffon Cloths......72  
All colors and black and white—40 inch—good draping qualities for frocks, blouses, tunics, etc. Limit 10 yds.

Women's Lisle and Cotton Union Suits......41  
Reg. sizes; our reg. \$9......47  
Extra sizes; our reg. \$9......47  
Low neck, sleeves—lace knee. Limit 4.

98 ct. Hand Bags......54  
Black moire and plain leathers—pearl, crepe and seal grains. Limit 3.

\$1.97 All Wool Broadcloths.....1.67  
50 and 54 inches wide—tan, taupe, cadet, Belgian blue, prune, seal brown, Havana, navy, black—sponged and shrunk. Limit 10 yds.

\$1.65 Costume Serges & Poplins.....1.24  
54 inches wide—all wool—Chartreuse, gold, apple green, navy, black—fine and medium twill. Limit 10 yds.

\$1.17 All-Wool Poplins......86  
42 inch—tan, Copenhagen, brown, myrtle, garnet, Burgundy, navy and black. Limit 10 yds.

\$1.85 Charmeuse.....1.34  
40-inch—satin face, street and evening colors. Limit 15 yds.

\$1.25 Crepe de Chine......94  
40-inch—light, dark, medium and fancy colors. Limit 15 yds.

12½ ct. Bleached and Unbleached Domest Flannel......9  
Limit 12 yds.

\$1.19 New Scrim Curtains......82  
Lace edge and insertions also with deep hem and insertion. Limit 3 prs.

25 ct. Curtain Madras......14  
Double border and vine centres—new design—yard wide. Limit 15 yds.

25 ct. New Cretonnes......16  
Chintz, floral and other artistic designs in about 40 styles—36 inch. Limit 15 yds.

\$3.98 New Irish Point Curtains.....2.66  
Dainty or showy border—15 styles. Limit 4 pr.

\$1.29 Silk Frou Frou Table Scarfs......86  
Green, rose, olive and wood tones—22½x50 inch. Limit 2.

Imported Tooth Brushes......12½  
Salesmen's samples—values 15 to 24 cts.—all clean—variety of kinds. Limit six.

39 ct. Castile Soap......23  
Large bar. Limit 3.

### SPRING SALE SPECIALS

**For Monday and Tuesday**

69 ct. White Ramie Linens......52  
44 inches wide, for sports skirts, suits, dresses, excellent wearing qualities. Limit 10 yds.

14 ct. Dish and Roller Towellings......11½  
With colored border. Limit 12 yds.

38 ct. Huck Towels......25  
Union linen huck—hemstitched in with damask borders. Limit dozen.

32 ct. Turkish Towels......23  
Bleached—absorbent—hemmed—wreath for initial—wide colored borders. Limit dozen.

\$2.69 Hemmed Table Sets.....1.74  
Bleached mercerized damask bordered cloth—63x63½—napkins 19 inch. Limit one.

15 ct. Men's Linen H'K's......11  
With ¼ inch hem. Limit dozen.

10 ct. Women's Linen H'K's......8  
With ¼ inch hem. Limit dozen.

\$1.98 Men's and Women's Umbrellas.....1.42  
Black silk and linen mixed, plain or decorated handles. Limit two.

Willington Spool Cotton—Dor......30  
Black and white—200-yard spools—best numbers—bur reg. 40 ct. dozen. Limit 2 dozen.

35 ct. Safety Pins—Gross......25  
Nickel plated—2, 2½, 3. Limit 3 gross.

### A Pongee Frock



Our reg. \$22.98  
18.75

One-piece pongee frock (illustrated). Black ribbon lacing. All sizes for women and misses.

Our reg. \$22.98  
18.75

Alterations free of charge.

DAINTY SACSQUES  
(illustrated)—in white, with colored bands, either male or rose in color—have wide ribbon bands that hold the folds in place—4.00

ELABORATE SACSQUES of crepe de chine—in rose or blue—have much lace insertion and fine tucking—Special.....5.77

### BLOUSES! Very Lovely



GEORGETTE CREPE BLOUSE—(illustrated)—in white, with colored bands, either male or rose in color—have wide ribbon bands that hold the folds in place—15.50

GEORGETTE CREPE BLOUSES—(illustrated)—in white, with colored bands, either male or rose in color—have wide ribbon bands that hold the folds in place—15.50

With sport patterns for their decoration. Very effective are these gowns in the crepe. Some of the blouses have extremely fine tucks in the deep sailor collar and cuffs—others narrow ruffles. Unique buttons are used on these.....6.75

New blouses in washable satin, radium tulle, and Georgette crepe—all as distinctive in design as general ideas can make them—here. The low prices will amaze you.